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# TO CATCH A NAZI

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**SUBJECT D" IS THE LABEL MOST RECENTLY** used by the federal government to describe a certain high-ranking Nazi collaborator, an alleged war criminal whose cooperation with the Central Intelligence Agency allowed him to enter this country in 1949 and later become a U.S. citizen. Subject D's history was supposed to remain hidden; indeed, he felt so secure that his telephone number is listed under his real name. Now, after nearly 40 years, his secret is out.

Last June, the General Accounting Office (GAO) completed a three-year investigation of the illegal postwar immigration of Nazis and Nazi collaborators, and of the secret assistance they allegedly received from U.S. intelligence agencies. This sensitive federal study was ordered by the House Judiciary Committee to supplement a 1978 review of accusations that federal agencies obstructed the prosecution of alleged Nazi war criminals.

After reviewing voluminous files and conducting many interviews, the GAO found "no evidence of any U.S. agency program to aid Nazis or Axis collaborators to immigrate to the United States." But among the 114 cases it reviewed—dealing with a small fraction of the suspected war criminals—the GAO did discover five cases of Nazis or collaborators "with undesirable or questionable backgrounds who received some individual assistance in their U.S. immigrations." Although the 40-page report said that three of them were already dead, it named no names, or even nationalities, and referred to the five only as Subjects A through E. Much of the information about them and their activities remains classified. In two cases, the assisted individuals were protected by their intelligence contacts from authorities seeking to enforce immigration laws that prohibit the entry of war criminals and other persecutors.

The authors of the GAO report seem eager to justify the actions of the government, and regardless of bias, their effort hardly represents a comprehensive examination of this historic problem. Yet despite its shortcomings, the report is a landmark—an official admission that Nazis and Nazi collaborators were assisted in entering the United States by the CIA.

The Voice has learned that the collaborator discussed in the GAO report as "Subject D" is a prominent Ukrainian nationalist. In 1934, he was imprisoned for attempting to assassinate the interior minister of Poland; he ran the security force of a Ukrainian fascist organization and has been accused of ordering the murders of many of his countrymen; he attended a Gestapo training school where Jews were murdered for practice. He was considered an extremely valuable intelligence asset by the CIA, which protected him from war-crimes prosecution by the Soviets, brought him to this country under an assumed name and concealed his true past from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. So important was his case that in 1952 Attorney General James P. McGranery, the director of Central Intelligence, General Walter Bedell Smith, and the commissioner of the INS, Argyle R. Mackey, secretly agreed to per-

mit his residence here. In 1957, he became a U.S. citizen.

His name is Mykola Lebed, and he lives in Yonkers.

**MYKOLA LEBED IS 75 YEARS OLD, AND HAS** resided in this country for nearly half his life. Several years ago he moved from Washington Heights, a largely Jewish neighborhood, to a modest two-family brick house on a pleasant Yonkers hillside. Short, wiry, and bald, with alert blue eyes, the retired Lebed spends most of his days at home, where he is working on his memoirs.

His recollections are likely to be cast in the heroic, patriotic light that illuminates most histories written by adherents and defenders of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) that he once helped lead. All that can be seen in these accounts is a fiery commitment to an independent Ukrainian state and the resulting conflicts with both German and

Soviet oppressors. Obscured is the more complex story of OUN collaboration with Nazi war crimes, and the OUN's own fascist and racist ideology.

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with the OUN have been pieced together from Army Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) files, other military archives, and immigration records; from interviews with Ukrainians; and from histories of the period, including an eyewitness account in the files of the Holocaust documentation center at Yad Vashem in Israel. Large portions of pages from the CIC file on Lebed, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, were "sanitized" (that is, obliterated) by the Army before being released to the Voice. To justify the withholding of certain facts, the Army cited FOIA exemptions pertaining to protection of "intelligence sources" and "national security." One document was apparently withheld at the request of "another government agency," and another document had been removed from the National Archives by the CIA.

Four decades after the terrible events of the war, the history of fascism in Eastern Europe is no academic matter. In recent years, the U.S. government has finally begun to prosecute individual war criminals among the Nazi collaborators who found refuge on our shores. Most of the 45 cases brought so far by the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI), set up in 1979 to find and deport immigrants who committed war crimes, involve not German Nazis but collaborators from other nations.

The East European émigré communities have reacted with a ferocious campaign to abolish OSI, though very few of their members are threatened in any way. (Only in the Polish-American community has the crusade against OSI failed to gain significant support, perhaps because so many Polish gentiles were also victims of Nazism.) Each prosecution of a Nazi collaborator from Eastern Europe discredits the version of history upheld by some émigrés: that all the "anticommunists" of Eastern Europe were noble and free of any guilt for the crimes of Nazism.

Ukrainian leaders have outspokenly denounced the OSI, partly because the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists still exists and remains influential in the Ukrainian communities here and abroad. The OUN's founders are revered by Ukrainian publications and groups, while their collaboration with Hitler is not discussed. The OSI has made such evasion far more difficult. According to *Nazi War Criminals in America*, the authoritative handbook published last year by Charles R. Allen Jr., about one-fourth of the 45 OSI deportation or denaturalization cases have been brought against Ukrainians; in at least two cases, the individuals accused of participating in Nazi persecutions and murders were proven to be members of the OUN.

The Ukrainian targets of the OSI have so far been minor figures—"policemen" in the service of the Nazi occupiers of the Ukraine, who don't figure as individuals in any of the histories of the period. Most wartime leaders of the OUN are dead, and thus safe from the varieties of justice meted out in U.S., Soviet, Polish, or Israeli courts. Mykola Lebed is an exception. For years he was the OUN's third-in-command, and he ran the *Sluzhba Bezpeky*, its reputedly murderous security force.

Justice Department policy, which applies to the OSI, strictly prohibits any comment about pending cases. But the Voice has learned that the OSI maintains an open file on Lebed, making him a potential defendant in denaturalization proceedings. Materials pertaining to his case from the GAO probe, gleaned from the files of military intelligence and the CIA, were turned over to the OSI last summer.

If the OSI determines that Lebed ought to be stripped of his citizenship and deported, the information in those files may become public. Although much of Lebed's history remains murky, concealed in still-classified government archives, there is little doubt that such a display would severely embarrass not only the OUN and its supporters but the U.S. government as well—especially the CIA.

Under long-standing U.S. immigration laws, strengthened in 1978, those guilty of persecuting other people on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or political belief are barred from entering this country and are to be deported if they gain entry. Lebed escaped these sanctions because his sponsors mercifully cited Section 8 of the CIA Act of 1949. An obscure portion of the legislation that established the CIA, Section 8 permits the agency to bring 100 individuals a year to the U.S. for reasons of national security—regardless of their past. Brooklyn District Attorney Elizabeth Holtzman, who issued a scathing critique of the GAO report, found this revelation about Subject D's immigration "extremely disturbing." As a member of Congress in 1978, said Holtzman, "the CIA... assured me in a meeting and in a Congressional hearing that it never used the 100 numbers provision to facilitate the entry of Nazis."

Patti Volz, a spokeswoman for the CIA, declined to comment about Lebed or the GAO report. "We don't get into details," she said. "We don't confirm or deny that someone has worked for us. We wouldn't have any comment on him."

REPORTS FILED WITH THE ARMY Counterintelligence Corps in the late '40s give various dates for the birth of Mykola Lebed, but his naturalization papers say November 23, 1910. He was born in the western Ukrainian province of Galicia, an agricultural area controlled at various



UPI / BETTMANN NEWSPHOTOS

Führer for a day: Stefan Bandera led the OUN's short-lived autonomous fascist state.

times by Poland, the Soviet Union, and Germany. From his early school days in Lvov, the provincial capital, Lebed was involved in the right wing of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, which from the early '30s to the present has been dominated by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. The secretive, authoritarian OUN has constantly overshadowed Ukrainian politics, despite incessant factional strife in its ranks, both in the Ukraine and abroad.

Polish rule in the Ukraine during the '20s had been harsh, and the OUN's younger members included a number, who, like Lebed, were inclined to terrorism. Among them was the OUN's eventual would-be führer, Stefan Bandera, who in 1934 joined with Lebed and several others in plotting the assassination of Polish interior minister Bronislaw Pieracki. U.S. Army Counterintelligence reports say that Lebed initially escaped from Warsaw but was captured in Stettin, Germany, and returned to Poland by the German authorities. Convicted in a mass trial, Lebed, Bandera, and several others were condemned to death, but their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment.

The most sympathetic, scholarly account of the Ukrainian nationalist period is by John A. Armstrong, a strongly anti-Soviet and pro-Ukrainian historian who now teaches at the University of Wisconsin. His *Ukrainian Nationalism 1939-1945* notes that during the period Lebed and Bandera were imprisoned, the Ukrainian nationalist movement was solidifying its ties to the Nazi regime in Germany.

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"For many years," wrote Armstrong, "the OUN had been closely tied to German policy. This alignment was furthered by the semi-Fascist nature of its ideology, and in turn the dependence on Germany tended to intensify Fascist trends in the organization." In fact, most historians regard the OUN as wholly fascist—and tied to German intelligence—from its inception. It was the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939 that allowed Lebed and the other convicted plotters to escape from Warsaw's Swiety Kroyc prison after serving five years.

The xenophobic, antidemocratic, and anti-Semitic nationalism of the OUN meshed easily with Nazism. The compliment was not always returned, however. Within the Nazi hierarchy, opinions about the Ukrainians diverged. Powerful Nazi figures considered the Ukrainians an inferior people, unfit to govern themselves. Lebed and the other OUN leaders hoped that they would be able to set up an autonomous fascist state, as part of Hitler's "New Europe," under a German protectorate.

Such aspirations congealed into a military, political, and espionage alliance between the OUN and the Nazi war machine. Even after 1940, when the OUN split into two feuding factions—the more extremist led by Bandera, Lebed, and Yaroslav Stetako—both sought an accommodation with the German occupiers. Later in the war, the Germans alternated between courting and repressing the Ukrainians, but many OUN members served continuously in Nazi formations, from the Waffen-SS to the local police forces, which murdered thousands of Jews, Poles, communists, and socialists.

**DURING THE MONTHS FOLLOWING THEIR RELEASE** from prison, Lebed and the other OUN leaders chafed under the temporary constraints of the 1939 treaty between Hitler and Stalin. According to Armstrong, they eagerly abetted the secret Nazi preparations for war against the Soviets, sending their young adherents for German military training in mountain camps set up as early as 1939. Sources friendly to Lebed—whose slanted accounts may be found in memoranda of the Army Counterintelligence Corps between 1947 and 1948—understandably pass over this period.

Only hints of what Lebed was actually doing in 1940 and 1941 appear in the CIC file. A September 30, 1948, memo does mention that "For a short time, [Lebed] attempted to get an insight into the tactics of the German State Police and succeeded in joining the GESTAPO school in ZAKOPANE (District of Krakow), from which he ultimately fled." And a card in the CIC file identifies Lebed as "a graduate of the Zakopane, Poland criminal police school."

A former OUN member, now dead, wrote in 1958 a different and more detailed eyewitness version of Lebed's sojourn with the Gestapo. Retrieved from the files of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the declaration of Mykyta Kosakiv's'kyy portrays both Lebed and the OUN as eager pupils of the Gestapo.

Kosakiv's'kyy joined the OUN in 1933, and after sojourns in Czechoslovakia and Germany, returned to the Carpathian Ukraine late in 1939. He was among the older OUN officers present when the "Ukrainian Training Unit" was established at the Gestapo school in Zakopane that November. According to his declaration, the Ukrainian unit was "organized by the OUN leadership and by permission of the German Security Service." It included 120 specially selected trainees, under the guidance of a Gestapo officer named Walter Krüger and his assistant, Wilhelm Rosenbaum, both Germans. "The Ukrainian commandant of the entire unit was Lieutenant Vil'nyy," wrote Kosakiv's'kyy, "whose real name was Mykola Lebid [another transliteration of Lebed]." The curriculum included drills, intelligence and counterintelligence training, and interrogation techniques, but emphasized "exercises in the hardening of hearts."

"At sundown," recalled Kosakiv's'kyy, "Kruger, Rosenbaum, Lebid and a few students would go to Zakopane, enter some Jewish home on the way, grab a Jew, and bring him to the Unit. One evening, late in November or early in December 1939, they returned with a young Jew. In the presence of Ukrainian seniors, including myself, Kruger and Rosenbaum, fortified with alcohol, proceeded with their demonstration of the proper methods of interrogation."

Seeking to induce the innocent Jew to confess that he had raped an "Aryan" woman, the German officers beat and tortured him, using their fists, a sword, and iron bars. When he was bloody from head to toe, they applied salt and flame to his wounds. The broken man then confessed his fictional crimes, but that was not the end.

"Thereupon," Kosakiv's'kyy continues, "he was taken to the corridor of the house and the 'co-eds' (three women members of the unit) were called in. In their presence, Rosenbaum beat the Jew again with an iron pipe and Lebid too assisted manually in that 'heroic action.' One of the senior Ukrainians and I withdrew from that spectacle to our rooms. We learned afterwards that the tortured man was stripped naked, stood-up in front of the school as 'a sentry' and doused with water in heavy frost."

Kosakiv's'kyy and his friend protested to Lebed the next day, but the commandant told them bluntly that "it was the

duty of every member of the OUN to show the Germans that his nerves are just as tough as a German's and that the heart of any nationalist is as hard as steel." Such "practical exercises" continued unabated, according to Kosakiv's'kyy's testimony, and he fled Zakopane in early January 1940. Others equally sickened, he learned, left later, but Lebed remained until at least March of that year, when the unit moved from Zakopane to the nearby town of Rabka, where the Gestapo's depredations continued.

When he finished his statement on December 14, 1958, in Germany, the former OUN member already knew he was dying of heart disease, according to the introductory note written by the late Dr. Panas Fedenko, a Ukrainian liberal and implacable critic of the OUN. "I owe it to my conscience to make this declaration public, to report openly the facts I witnessed myself," Kosakiv's'kyy concluded. "Mykola Lebid evidently believes that his infamous accomplishments in the Ukraine and elsewhere are forgotten and so are the multitudes of his innocent victims, that every witness of his torture activities is either murdered or dead. Only Lebid is mistaken right there."

Kosakiv's'kyy's angry testament must be read in context, as the product of one man's remorseful memory, and of Ukrainian émigré rivalries as well; obviously it was published to discredit Lebed and the OUN. Yet there is supporting evidence for his story in the historical record. The Zakopane school existed, according to Dr. Aharon Weiss of Yad Vashem, and was moved to the nearby town of Rabka in 1940. There was a Captain Krüger, mentioned above, who commanded a Gestapo unit in the area, and helped lead a joint Nazi-OUN pogrom when the German Army's Brandenburg regiment occupied the Galician capital of Lvov in late June 1941.

And there is also no question that a German officer named Wilhelm Rosenbaum was a commandant at Zakopane and Rabka during the training of Ukrainians. In 1964, that same Rosenbaum was arrested in West Germany and charged, among other crimes, with the murder of 200 Jews at Rabka between May 1942 and January 1943. According to Simon Wiesenthal's 1967 book *The Murderers Among Us*, the unit was a "training center for future cadres of SS killers . . . SS men at Rabka were being hardened so they would not break after a few weeks of duty. They had to become insensitive to the sight of blood, to the agonized shouts of women and children. The job must be done with a minimum of fuss and a maximum of efficiency. That was a *Führerbe-fehl*—the Fuhrer's order." Rosenbaum was convicted in Hamburg in 1968 and sentenced to hard labor for life.

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Lebed declined to be interviewed by the Voice about Zakopane or any of his wartime activities. But in a brief conversation on the doorstep of his Yonkers home last month, he conceded that he had been at the Gestapo school, although he believed it had been during the winter of 1940-41, not 1939-40 as Kosakivsky stated. "Oh yes," he said. "I left after five weeks. I have exactly the dates. I quit."

**LEBED'S TRAINING AT ZAKOPANE, HOWEVER** cursory, was soon recognized by his fellow leaders in OUN-B, whose acronym designated its domination by the nationalist fuhrer Bandera. When their split from the old leadership became irrevocable in 1941, Bandera commissioned the creation of a "security service," the *Sluzhba Bezpeky*, under Lebed's command. Historians of the OUN-B agree that he ran the SB not only during the war, but long afterward. Armstrong, who interviewed Lebed at length, stated the facts with characteristic discretion: "In Lebed—small in stature, quiet, yet determined, hard—the SB found a well-qualified leader, but one who was to acquire for himself and his organization an unenviable reputation for ruthlessness." In an interview last month Armstrong was still sympathetic to Lebed, but more candid. "He grew up fighting against the Poles," explained the historian, "and he developed a terrible terrorist complex. He killed other Ukrainians, rivals in the organization [OUN]."

Yet Lebed told the Voice that he had never commanded the SB. He claimed that the SB had instead been run by someone named "Artanych... He's dead now."

Such reluctance to assume the SB's legacy is understandable. Even those Ukrainians who ignore the fascist brutalities against Jews and Poles are still troubled, and in some cases outraged, by the SB's infamous assaults on Ukrainians who dissented from the OUN-B leadership.

Lebed's direct responsibility for crimes attributed to the OUN-B is difficult to establish. Perhaps the lowest point of the Banderites' alliance with Nazism was the occupation of L'vov in June and July 1941, when Yaroslav Stetako and a large contingent of OUN-B troops entered that city along with the Brandenburg regiment and other German detachments. Several days of mass murder followed. L'vov's Jewish population was decimated, but Polish university professors and anyone who could be tied to the Communists were also killed. Survivors reported that the Ukrainians were even more bloodthirsty than their German patrons. According to *German Rule in Russia*, by historian Alexander Dallin, "Bandera's followers, including those in the *Nachtigall* regiment (a Ukrainian SS detachment), were displaying considerable initiative, conducting purges and pogroms."

Ironically, the alliance between the Nazis and the OUN-B came apart that same week in L'vov, after Stetako proclaimed an independent Ukraine. Loyal to the Fuhrer, who was in their view creating a glorious new Europe, the Ukrainians still dreamed of their own state. Bandera, the Ukrainian fuhrer, named Stetako prime minister and Lebed minister of security. But the new regime didn't last long.

By July 9 the Nazis would no longer put up with this "independent" charade, and arrested Bandera, Stetako, and other members of the leadership. Lebed escaped; the others were held under "house arrest" in Berlin but they were not mistreated. According to Armstrong, the OUN leaders "were allowed to carry on their political activities in Berlin; Stetako was even able to go to Cracow, where he consulted with Lebed, whom he had secretly delegated to take command of all activities in the Ukrainian lands." Even pro-OUN writers admit that the German repression of the Ukrainian nationalists was mild, and cooperation continued on many levels throughout the war.

There were periods when some of the nationalist Ukrainians, formed into guerrilla groups, fought the Germans as well as the Soviet partisans, and there is evidence that Lebed took part in those actions, especially after 1942. But by 1943, the Banderites were cooperating in the formation of a new Ukrainian SS division, and in 1944 Bandera himself—though he had been interned at Sachsenhausen concentration camp—was still assisting the German war effort against the Russians.

Lebed, who had meanwhile adopted the nom de guerre Maxym Ruban, tried to seize control of all factions in the nationalist movement. Independent nationalist bands were carrying out guerrilla actions in Volhynia and the western Ukraine under the name of the Ukrainian Partisan Army (UPA). This was intolerable to Lebed, who demanded that all the Ukrainian guerrillas come under his command. The result was vicious internecine warfare among the nationalists, a period from which Lebed's reputation did not emerge unscathed. Leading figures of the non-OUN forces were "liquidated," according to a 1948 CIC memo: "As a result, the Ukrainians now have difficulty forgetting the fact that Lebed killed some Ukrainian partisans who were fighting for the same cause."

Other writers, like the Ukrainians Panas Fedenko and O. Shuliak, condemned Lebed in harsh terms for these killings after the war. Shuliak wrote in 1947 that Lebed's SB men carried out the murders of dissenters from the OUN line. "It is perfectly evident that neither soldiers nor officers of the UPA had anything to do with these atrocities. The doers were the Security men under the orders of Lebed." Massacres and other acts of terror were also carried out

against civilians, against Soviet prisoners of war, against entire Polish villages in the Ukraine, and against Jews fleeing from Nazi persecution.

In his own booklet on the history of the UPA, published in 1946, Lebed says its aim was "to clear the forests and the surrounding areas of foreign elements." According to the late historian Philip Friedman, this meant not only Poles but Jews and Russian partisans as well. Friedman says that postwar OUN efforts to disclaim responsibility for anti-Jewish atrocities "cannot be taken seriously."

**LEBED'S CAREER IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE** war is difficult to trace. By then the OUN had established a new front-group, the Supreme Ukrainian Liberation Council—known by its transliterated initials, UHVR—of which Lebed became "Foreign Secretary." Several CIC documents report that his wife and daughter were held in Buchenwald concentration camp by the Germans for several months as hostages against Lebed's guerrilla activities, but they were released in 1944, well before the war's end.

After 1945 he mainly lived in Rome and Munich, seeking Allied support for the remnants of the UPA to fight against the victorious Soviets. A "political history" in the CIC file says that he traveled illegally around Western Europe, organizing the foreign offices of the UHVR.

By the end of 1947, conditions in Rome were growing uncomfortable for Lebed, who was afraid that the Soviets might attempt to seize him there. He sought and apparently received the help of U.S. intelligence to leave Rome safely.

Lebed's file also shows that around the same time, he and other OUN leaders began to proclaim the evolution of their politics in a more democratic direction. The motive behind such declarations is clear. In the cold war that was already taking shape, only self-styled democrats could partake of Uncle Sam's largesse.

But whether Lebed actually converted to Western liberalism is unclear from the CIC file. Several reports note that when the OUN-B split at a Munich conference in 1947, Lebed gave a speech berating the "weakening and democratization of the party line," which other members in turn denounced as redolent of fascism.

Regardless of his postwar political views, however, it is clear from the GAO report that Subject D was used as an American agent soon after the war's end. (Bandera, too, obtained a post with a Western intelligence agency—the West German BND, run by the former Nazi *Abwehr* chief Reinhard Gehlen, who recruited scores of ex-Nazis and collaborators for his network. In his memoirs, Gehlen identifies Bandera as one of his men.)

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